

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Fiscal Year 2009

The Design Review Board held 20 meetings during FY 09, including two site visits to Pomeroy Village, at the intersection of Pomeroy Lane and Route 116. This was twice as many meetings as in FY 08, and more than twice as many as in FY 07 and FY 06. It should be noted that prior to FY 09, the Board was often at low strength (with only 2 or 3 members out of an intended total of five) and during those years the Board often had difficulty in achieving a quorum.

Public Projects Reviewed

Pomeroy Village Streetscape – Working with the Department of Public Works and the Planning Department, the Board continued its discussions and review of the intersection of Pomeroy Lane and Route 116. On October 30, 2008, the Board held a public meeting at Crocker Farm School and invited over 500 residents and business owners from throughout the Pomeroy Village area. Approximately 32 people attended the meeting. Town Engineer, Jason Skeels, and Senior Planner, Christine Brestrup, presented information about the intersection as well as plans for improvements to the roadway and streetscape. Members of the Design Review Board participated in a dialogue with members of the public who asked questions and shared their comments and recommendations on the proposed improvements. During the year, Board members sought the input of and heard from a variety of stakeholders, including UMass Transit, people with disabilities and abutting landowners. The Board worked to develop strategies for encouraging the intersection's development as a Village Center. After the end of FY 09, the Town Manager transferred responsibility for carrying these plans forward from the Design Review Board to the Department of Public Works, so that the work will be coordinated with other roadway projects along the Route 116 corridor, already under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent of Public Works. The Design Review Board remains interested in the future of Pomeroy Village and in the prospect of connecting Pomeroy Village to the South Amherst Common; and for improving the pedestrian experience both within the intersection, and between the Village Center and the Common.

Downtown Streetscape Improvements (St. Brigid's Church to the Fire Station) – The DRB reviewed and approved designs for streetscape improvements for these stretches of downtown sidewalk.

North Amherst School – Repairs – The DRB was asked to support a variance from the requirement for a ramp at the front entrance to the building. The building is historical and there was already an accessible entrance.

West Cemetery Plantings – The Historical Commission has been working on a project to restore the landscape of the West Cemetery. The Commission has been coordinating its work with that of a fraternity at UMass which offered to provide labor to install and maintain the plantings. The DRB was asked for its recommendations on the project.

The Design Review Board Handbook – Working with the Planning Department, the DRB revised the Design Review Board Handbook, which was first published in 1983, to bring it up to date, reorganize it and make it more useful to citizens and those planning projects in the downtown area as well as in other areas within the Design Review Board's jurisdiction.

The revised Handbook is now available on the Town of Amherst website at <http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentView.aspx?DID=1123>.

Town Common – The DRB met with representatives of the Farmers’ Market and with the Historical Commission to discuss whether it would be appropriate to install a sign on the Town Common announcing the presence of the Farmers’ Market. At a joint meeting with the Historical Commission, the DRB began to develop ideas about what (if anything) might be appropriate installations for the Town Common. Ideas that had been proposed by others included various types of signs, both historical and those serving individual groups, as well as a stage for public performances. The DRB also began to discuss plans for the renovation of Spring Street with the DPW.

Community Field – The DRB reviewed the design for a new baseball scoreboard and sign, proposed to honor Stan Ziomek, a long-time organizer and supporter of baseball for Amherst youth.

Amherst Regional High School – The DRB reviewed the design for a new scoreboard for soccer, field hockey and other sports at the High School fields.

Private Projects (Downtown and on Town-owned property) Reviewed

The redevelopment and improvement of downtown buildings and sites continued. The following projects and signs were reviewed in FY 09:

Projects – Amherst College’s plans for renovation and addition to The Lord Jeffery Inn; Grace Episcopal Church’s color scheme for the renovated Rectory; Delano’s Restaurant’s plans for an outdoor dining area and addition to the building; Amherst Brewing Company’s signs, awning and lighting; Papa Gino’s awning, signs and fence/railing.

Signs and Awnings – Mixed Greens, Miss Saigon, Computers and More, Matt’s Barber Shop, Papa Gino’s, Stacker’s Pub, TD Bank’s new sign system for Amity Street and Triangle Street sites, J’s Cuisine, Thorne’s Guitar in the Carriage Shops, handmade wooden signs at Gypsy Dog Gallery and Amherst Martial Arts, Living Routes – Study Abroad in Ecovillages, Moti’s and Urban Exchange.

The Board’s recommendations regarding an initial sign proposal by TD Bank resulted in an improved proposal for signs at this central and highly-visible location in downtown Amherst at the corner of Amity Street.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Winston
Design Review Board